



# Owl Creek Baptist Church

4044 Owl Creek Church Road  
Mount Vernon, OH 43050  
Pastor: (H) (440) 943-2898  
(C) (440) 503-3390  
Web: [www.owlcreekchurch.org](http://www.owlcreekchurch.org)



**OUR VISION:** *To be a continuing light in the world's darkness, inspiring people to love God and to love others.*

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## News and Announcements...

❖ **Blessed 15th Sunday after Pentecost!** This Sunday, Pastor Chapman will continue his series of sermons on the Old Testament prophets:

Sermon: "Prisoners of Hope"  
Scripture: Zechariah 9:9-12

❖ **We continue our outdoor worship** at 10:00 a.m. In the event of rain prior to the service, members of the Executive Board will phone each household (by about 9:00 a.m.) to give notice of cancellation. If rain happens to occur during the service, participants will be invited to enter the sanctuary (masks and social distancing will be required) for the remainder of the service. Those who do not wish to join indoors are free to leave at that point.

❖ **Martha Robey** observed her 72nd wedding anniversary on Saturday, September 5th, with her late husband, **Ross**. Pastor Chapman was able to be with her that afternoon, visiting in the gazebo outdoors on the lawn of The Living Center. The pastor enjoyed listening to many of Martha's fondest memories of her much beloved husband.

❖ **The ABC Ohio Annual Gathering** will be held on Tuesday, October 6th, at the Crown Plaza Hotel North in Columbus. Attendees will mask and social distance, and there will be no shared meals. The meeting will also be live streamed for those who do not wish to attend in person. An address will be delivered by Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Acting General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches, USA. The event is free of charge, but registration is necessary. These may be done online at: <https://www.abc-ohio.org/>

❖ **Treasurer Peg Carpenter** reports that, to date, Owl Creek's "Buckeye Mission and Ministry Offering" totals \$620, which surpasses the stated goal of \$550. Praise the Lord for your generosity!

❖ **The Executive Board** is planning its next ZOOM meeting for Monday, September 14th. If you have issues for the board to discuss, you may submit them to the pastor or any individual board member.

❖ **Send us your news items!** Phone or send an email to Bonnie Kohl or Pastor Chapman, telling us about the news events of your lives.

## Let us lift up in prayer...



### Our own beloved nation...

Relief from the COVID-19 pandemic, that has imperiled us for months;

That those who have lost jobs due to the pandemic find ways to make ends meet;

That our schools, and their students, and administrators, find safe ways to hold classes;

That our President, embroiled in so many controversies, be able to lead our government efficiently and judiciously;

That our society, rife with political division, may be transformed into true American unity and neighborliness;

That fire-fighters in western states find ways to win the battle against dozens of conflagrations.

### The Pastoral Search Committee...

Nearing the end of their work, may they continue to exercise discernment enabled by God's Spirit, finishing the process of seeking a candidate for Owl Creek's next pastor.

# BIBLE STUDY



**TEXT: John 20:19 - 21:14 (Resurrection appearances)**

**The power of the Christian faith** lies in its witness to the resurrection of Jesus, plain and simple. Without the resurrection, God's power over death is not fully demonstrated. Without the resurrection, evil is not conquered and remains a force in the world. Without the resurrection, there is no future and therefore no hope for humankind. And without Jesus having been raised from the dead, there is nothing upon which we Christians could base courageous moral decisions and righteous living. Everything of importance in life and faith hinges on this one event. All the other miracles of God in history—the Red Sea crossing at the exodus, the founding of Israel in Canaan, David's victory over Goliath, Elijah's vanquishing the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, even the many signs of Jesus during his ministry—utterly pale in comparison to this one act of God, the most consequential moment of all time.

**The purpose of the gospels** was not to give their readers a theology of the resurrection. Instead, they have given us a narrative description, a blow-by-blow account of how the resurrection was experienced. That the resurrected Jesus was first seen by a woman, Mary Magdalene, must be appreciated as a terribly risky part of the story. If there had been some sort of conspiracy to manufacture the resurrection to produce a martyr to inspire a social movement to carry on the "spirit" of Jesus, it would have been a grave mistake to lead with the testimony of a woman. In that highly patriarchal era, a woman's testimony was banned from all legal proceedings, whether they were Greco-Roman or Jewish. The curious question is, why would the early Christians have allowed Mary to have the initial testimony if it were not absolutely truthful? Mary really did see and speak with Jesus. In fact, he actually approached *her*. Again, she did not recognize him, at first, because *no one expected the resurrection*. Thus, the gospel accounts—and especially John—have the first Christian community confessing that they, the believers, were wrong on two counts: First, about the reality of the resurrection, and second, about the status of women in society. The early Christian community was simply telling the story of how God profoundly changed their whole view of the world. An actual event—not some abstract idea or new philosophy—was the reason for those changes.

**John's gospel goes on to narrate** three more episodes in which Jesus appeared to his disciples. The first (20:19-23) is a brief encounter during the evening of that same day. Mary, having seen Jesus alive at dawn, went back to tell the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." We are not told the disciples' response. We are simply informed by John that Jesus appeared to them in a room where they were huddled "for fear of the Jews." In other words, the disciples had good reason to suspect that if they killed their master, the authorities may be hunting them, next. What extremely mixed feelings they must have had, just three days removed from the brutal torture and execution of their Lord. But now they had to process the testimony of Mary's meeting with

Jesus, corroborated by Peter's and John's witness to the empty tomb. What kind of thoughts danced in their minds that whole day until evening? What were their conversations like? Certainly, nothing was settled among them until Jesus, himself, mysteriously appeared in that locked room. His first word to them must have been magical: "Peace!" And then he said that word, again, as if it's very utterance could command it. In a symbolic gesture, Jesus "breathed" upon the disciples. In both the Aramaic language of Jesus and the Greek language of John, the words *ruach* and *pneuma*, respectively, were used for "breath" as well as "spirit." Human breath was viewed as the "spirit of life," echoing the creation of humankind in Genesis 2:7. This constituted a "new creation," where Jesus commissioned his disciples for proclaiming the new order of eternal life, one which would begin with grace and forgiveness.

**The second appearance of Jesus**, we are told, happened a week later (20:26-29). Once again, imagine the wonderment that must have filled those first few days. This time, Jesus had some unfinished business with one particular disciple. History has been harsh on "doubting Thomas," as if he were any different from those of us in our day. "Show me," he said. "Seeing is believing!" He was uttering the mantra of our age, where every must be demonstrated to our satisfaction before giving trust. Yet, the demand for evidence is perhaps not the worst position one can hold. Our age is so cynical that many people, even when given proof, dismiss it out of hand, casting the evidence as "fake news" if it is not what someone wants to hear. If Thomas' doubt was so out of place, then we must wonder why Jesus submitted to his need to see and touch his body. But Thomas' faith erupted into worship—"My Lord, and my God," he said to Jesus. That confession would have constituted blasphemy if it were not absolutely true. But Jesus commended his disciple. He then uttered a beatitude, blessing those who must believe without having the benefit of seeing Jesus with their own eyes. That blessing, of course, was directed at us.

**The final appearance** of the risen Jesus in the Gospel of John (21:1-14) has somewhat of a parallel in the Gospel of Luke (24:36-43), in that the setting involved a meal of fish. John simply states that "after these things" the disciples who were fishermen by trade went back to the Sea of Galilee. Was it a few days later? Weeks? All we can conclude is that this episode was significant for connecting the reality of the resurrection to a new direction for the lives of the disciples. For they seemed so unsure of things. Peter said, "I'm going back to my old fishing job. What else have I got to do?" Then Jesus appeared once again, and directed the disciples find fish by merely casting their nets over the opposite side of the boat. The miraculous catch could only have been provided by Jesus. John (the beloved disciple) sees Jesus, and believes. "It is the Lord!" he exclaims. Upon *hearing* this, Peter believes, and swims ashore to greet his Master.

**Mary, Thomas, John, Peter**, and the others all had different reactions to the news, and to Jesus himself. The narrative certainly supports the fact that our experiences with the risen Christ are not all the same. Perhaps John told these different stories to affirm that each believer comes to personal faith in a different way. But the stories also affirm that Jesus meets each of us in a way that is unique to our own personal need to discover him.